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ABSTRACT

Learning how to informalize and integrate the school day was the major quest of 22 American students assigned to practice teach in English primary schools. Informal, integrated English classrooms are defined and described. American and English teaching in these classrooms is assessed for seriousness and clarity of purpose, organization, establishment and maintenance of standards, delegation of responsibility, perception of possibilities for studies, lead studies, lead questioning, conservation and creative use of materials, problem identification, presentation of children's work, coping with vertical grouping, record keeping, forcing integration of studies, and relating to others. Discussion indicated that the American students encountered problems in their 11-week stay that hindered the achievement of their goals. Culture shock and the role of the directing teacher were two forces over which they had little control; other teaching difficulties involved their organizational skills, ability to define problems decision-making capabilities, ability to ask leading questions and to define standards for the children. The benefits of this practice teaching experience are also discussed. Included is an outline for a school practice notebook required of each practice teacher. (SDH)

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A TRANS-ATLANTIC QUEST:

REFLECTIONS ON PRACTICE TEACHING IN

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A TRANS-ATLANTIC QUEST: REFLECTIONS ON PRACTICE TEACHING IN LANCASHIRE, ENGLAND

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Twenty-three Americans left home on March 16, 1972 bound for a country no larger than the State of Florida but considerably older and more steeped in tradition than any of the states--England. Their length of stay abroad was to total eleven weeks. Their assignment was to practice teach in English primary schools. Their quest was to learn how to informalize and integrate the school day.

The group was comprised of twenty women and two men students enrolled in teacher preparation programs in the Department of Childhood Education of the University of Florida. The students were accompanied by a faculty member of the named department who, alternatively and simultaneously, functioned as group guide, supervisor, counsellor, confidant, consultant, interpreter, critic, defender, public relations person, and mother. This paper represents that many-roled group leader's attempt to reflect on the students' professional experiences in Lancashire County, England.

Informal Teaching and the Integrated Day: Definitions

By informal teaching, English educators do not mean free, unstructured activity on the part of children. They use the term in its strictest denotation, i.e., as the antonym of formal teaching wherein the teacher works with a class

of children as a totality, attempting to develop learnings through lesson sequences and text assignments while maintaining the same standards of achievement for all regardless of individual differences in ability or achievement. By contrast, the term, informal teaching, refers to the teacher's structuring of the class environment and the children's tasks in such ways as to promote the simultaneous occurrence of different activities undertaken by individuals and groups. The good informal teacher holds different standards of achievement for different children. He works from children's interests rather than exclusively from textbook lessons. He acts as coordinator of the multiple strands of activity engaged in by the children which he seeks to stimulate, connect, and extend.

It is particularly worth noting that whereas Americans tend to associate informality in teaching with the blurring of status lines in interpersonal relations (particularly where this pertains to the location of authority in classroom role relationships), the English do not entertain similar connotations of the term. Indeed, interpersonal relations among head teachers and their staffs, teachers and children, school people and parents were found to be highly formal in that status lines were sharply drawn, roles clearly defined and separated, and communication patterns governed by norms for role relationships. In the classroom, children are expected to honor the social distance between teacher and pupil. The English teacher does not relinquish his authority as group leader. Rather, he may be seen to continually reaffirm the authority vested in his role in his interactions with children.

The term integrated day has a host of meanings even among the English. Many things are done in the name of integration which seem inconsistent with the detonative meaning of the word. Where attempts at integration of studies were observable in the classrooms visited by the Americans, the practices seemed to fall into two major categories:

1. Integration of studies sometimes meant that a child's interests (whether self-determined or teacher-stimulated) were utilized as the source of thematic material for reading, writing, number work, and creative expression. For instance, from a child's painting of an experience or subject of interest would be drawn ideas for written work, reading, and maths. These areas of study would thus be integrated to the degree that they emanated from a central theme. The teacher's role involved exploring all possibilities for language, number, and creative work from as many themes of interest as were represented among members of the class.

2. The second (and more often cited and observed) category of integrated day practices refers to the timing and differentiation of activities in language, maths, and creative expression. When children were engaged in varied activities at different times and, to some extent, by self-determination of when activities were to be undertaken and how much to accomplish at one sitting, the integrated day was considered to be in operation. Thus, a child might decide to do his maths work early in the day and to complete "x" number of work cards or tasks as directed by his teacher, followed by creative explorations in the visual arts, then some writing stimulated by work cards, readings, interests and/or experiences. He might finish his day with reading relative to an assignment or a self-determined interest. Not all children would necessarily attempt so many types of activities during any one day, but certain teacher-held expectations for children's completion of language, maths, and creative work would serve as a reference point for each child's selection of activities during each day or week. In this scheme, children and teachers would not necessarily attempt to derive activities for all types of skill development from one topic of interest. Maths work, writings, readings, and other studies might not necessarily be interrelated through a theme.

The first definition of the integrated day is far more demanding, operationally, than the second. The teacher's task can become overwhelming as he tries to tap all the children's ideas for development of entirely individualized curricula. Perhaps this is why only one teacher of the fifteen (in thirteen classrooms) to whom the American students were assigned for practice teaching presented a model of teaching which fostered integration of children's studies in the spirit of the first definition. A description of that teacher's methods is offered here by way of example:

> The class was comprised of seven-year-olds who had experienced informal, integrated approaches to education during the year prior to the one in which the Americans met them. Thus, the children might be considered experienced in the mode of class activity advanced by their teacher.
>
> Each day, the children assembled as a group with their teacher for discussion of activities already underway and possible extension of those activities or exploration of new areas of interest. During these discussions, the children and teacher would plan their work. Plans were generally made on a continuing basis; the expectation was that once begun, a piece of work would be completed. Stress was placed on individual assumption of responsibility for the process and product of all work undertaken.
>
> All the children were required to complete some maths, written work, and construction or creative arts activity during the day. This requirement was flexible in that quality standards were weighted more heavily than quantity standards. If a child was attaining special accomplishment by working on one activity for most of a day, he was permitted to continue doing so. The stipulation was that by the end of each week, or at each checkpoint (which occurred frequently), some balance among types of completed work was to be attained. If, in the teacher's judgment, the child did not regulate his own work with sufficient discipline, he would be directed to undertake assignments in areas of study which he had not given adequate attention.
>
> The children were encouraged to develop their own ideas for working through an interest to extend their maths, language, and creative capabilities. But the teacher was keenly aware of possibilities for the extension of children's interests. Through carefully phrased and oftimes leading questions, she directed a child's attention to new possibilities for study.

Most of the class day was spent in individual and small group work for varied skills development, all interconnected by a common theme. For instance, when studying space flight (an interest which arose during a class discussion of an Apollo Mission underway at the time and cultivated by the American students), the children identified diverse possibilities for exploration. Two children built a lunar rover using Junior Engineer blocks. When the vehicle was completed, the building process was recorded by the children as were measurements made of the model's dimensions. Other children became intrigued with the lunar surface and made a papier mache model of lunar terrain. Associated written work reported findings relative to moon craters and lunar soil. Maths activities included scale measurements of lunar peaks and depressions. Another set of activities was instigated by some children's report to their peers on the theoretical prediction of a previously unknown planet in the solar system which had been reported in the newspapers. Imaginative writing was begun about the unknown planet, its characteristics and possibilities. Paintings and collages were created to accompany the stories. Number work on relative distances among planets in the solar system was explored.

When an area of children's interests did not lend itself naturally to writing or number work of some purpose and variety, the children's interest-provoked activities were supplemented by work cards and other materials for skills development.

The children met with their teacher as a unit for creative movement and story times. A reading program was carried on apart from (and in addition to) the interests explorations to insure the continuing development of reading vocabulary and skills.

The teacher maintained high standards for work of every type undertaken by the children. When work which was judged to be of inferior quality was submitted, the child was expected to renew his efforts on the same tasks to improve the quality of the product. This regulation was strictly enforced. It served to impress upon the children the seriousness of their work and the emphasis on both quality of performance and product which the teacher made explicit by word and action. The children always knew what was expected of them.

Although the children were at liberty to embark on learning activities of their own choosing, with teacher spproval, the class was highly structured. The teacher retained her position as group leader at all times. She was typically English in this regard, especially where control of social behavior was concerned. The class appeared to run smoothly because the teacher was aware of everything that was underway in the room. She was decisive in her behavior at all times, never appearing to be at a loss for ideas or recommendations. And she maintained close supervision over the children, constantly reinforcing appropriate standards of work and checking potentially disruptive behavior.

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> This was not a permissive classroom. The teacher used directive techniques often. She employed methods of leading children to develop understandings by asking a series of focusing questions. Although the children were invited and encouraged to define directions for themselves, the teacher assumed much responsibility for aiding that process and pointing children to possibilities they might not have thought of for themselves. The effect was that studies were centered about themes and myriad activities emerged from those themes. Because the teacher was sufficiently knowledgeable and demanding and intent on forging connections among the children's work, she was able to engineer some very sophisticated programs of study with and for her children. The work products of these seven-year-olds were often impressive.

Such was the pattern of activity which was evident in one classroom where quality education, through integrated studies (as measured against the standards of the first definition offered earlier herein), was in progress. Of the other classes in which the American students were placed, three were progressive in the sense of the second definition of integrated day practices; five were about midway on the traditional-progressive, formal-informal, segregated-integrated continua; and four classes were traditional.

In all fairness to the English teachers with whom the Americans associated, their attempts to integrate and informalize their children's day should be acknowledged. Yet many were experiencing problems of no small moment, problems which militated against the smooth flow and continual upgrading of children's involvement in purposeful work. Poor quality of workmanship and achievement was sometimes evident as well. (These problems are referred to again in subsequent pages where an attempt is made to analyze them.)

While each classroom presented a somewhat different picture of structure and the nature of children's work therein, there was a pattern which became evident in the classrooms of infants' teachers who were making attempts to move toward informalizing and integrating their children's work. Essentially, the pattern was as follows:

> The children, often vertically grouped and representing ages five, six, and seven, were regrouped within the class most often by age. Each group was designated by a color. For example, the fives might be color coded yellow, the sixes red, and the sevens green. The curriculum was divided into three areas: maths, writing, and "creative." (This last label usually referred to free activity with varied arts and crafts media.)
>
> The classroom was generally organized with an area for maths work, one for writing, and one for "creative." A chart for each day of the week was often displayed. It designated which group would begin each area on which day of the week at each time of day. The day was divided into four time units, punctuated by morning break or playtime of about fifteen minutes, dinner or noon break of one and a half hours, and afternoon playtime of fifteen minutes. The first three segments of the class day were used for each group's undertaking of activities in each of the curriculum areas. The final segment of the day was usually used for story telling, group signing, "show and tell," or discussion. At other times during a week, adjustments in the timetable would be made for creative movement and other large group activities. A timetable for one day might appear as:

	Maths	Writing	Creative
9:00-9:15 a.m.	Attendance/Routine/Orientation to Schedule		
9:15-10:30 a.m.	Yellow group	Blue group	Green group
10:30-10:45 a.m.	- - - - - - - - -	-Playtime-	- - - - - - - - - -
10:45-12:00 a.m.	Blue group	Green group	Yellow group
12:00-1:30 p.m.	- - - - - - - - - -	Dinner-	- - - - - - - - - -
1:30-2:45 p.m.	Green group	Yellow group	Blue group
2:45-3:00 p.m.	- - - - - - - - - -	-Playtime-	- - - - - - - - - -
3:00-3:30 p.m.	Storytime/Discussion/Other class activities		

The children would report to the table, station or bay designated for the activities in a curriculum area according to the class timetable. Once at that location, activities might be varied (offering choices among alternatives) or uniform (in the event that the teacher had one activity prepared for all the children to undertake when their turn at the area was at hand). An observer would sometimes find the fives, sixes, and sevens doing similar tasks at each area as their turns came due. Much hinged on the imagination of the teacher, her knowledge of the children, and her ability to prepare sufficient materials or stimuli to spark the children's interests. This is no small task. Thus, variations on a theme of work were not always in evidence. And, the children were not always sufficiently challenged to probe an activity beyond its most superficial elements.

SOME ASSESSMENTS OF EDUCATION IN LANCASHIRE SCHOOLS

In the author's capacity as student teaching supervisor, she spent days in schools on repeated visits. Because students were paired for work in classrooms, it was not unusual for the writer to spend a morning or an afternoon with a pair of students in their classroom, often becoming involved in work with children. In addition to spending many hours in classrooms where the American students were working, the writer was able to visit other schools where outstanding use of informal, integrated practices was in evidence. The intensity of this type of classroom visitation naturally led to reflection on the experiences for assessment of what was seen and done in Lancashire schools.

Discussed below are some of the writer's positive impressions of English primary education.

Seriousness and Clarity of Purpose

By contrast with most Americans, the English are serious-minded. This characteristic is evident among the best teachers who know what they are about and approach their work with an intensity which precludes the joviality

characteristic of so many Americans. In part, their seriousness may be an outgrowth of their cultural upbringing. But it also reflects their apparent lack of need to adopt a nonserious posture as a smoke screen for feelings of uncertainty (or inadequacy).

The most successful teachers were highly analytical persons. They appeared to have given a great deal of thought to their tasks as teachers. From this thinking they drew their views on education in general as well as their directions for work with specific children. They seemed to possess a certainty of belief and sense of direction which commanded respect whether or not it met with agreement.

Organization

Ability to organize the physical space for children's activities, the materials within that space, the temporal dimension of the class day, and the deployment of people through time and space was a prominent characteristic of the best English teachers. Even those teachers who were not apparently "in charge of" activities at any particular time, were quietly in command of the situation. Everything that went on in their classrooms was a result of their structuring of space, materials, time, movement patterns, and possibilities for activity. Within the structure, which varied from teacher to teacher, the children had some freedom to operate--but always within the boundaries of the structure established by the teacher. Children were sometimes invited to participate in this structuring, but rarely were they asked to assume major responsibility for it. The children's task was

viewed as carrying on with the work they had undertaken, not the administration of the classroom. They were delegated responsibilities for maintaining the environment (tidying up and contributing materials), but they were expected to focus their attention on substantive tasks with the same seriousness of purpose their teachers exhibited relative to instructional responsibilities.

Establishment and Maintenance of Standards

The teachers who were doing the best work with children, in the estimation of the writer, held high standards for the children's attainments in all areas of knowledge and skills development. Most importantly, they were able to articulate those standards, defining them with sufficient clarity to make known to the children and others exactly what was expected. The standards might vary from child to child, as one would expect if instruction is consistent with the theories of child development which recognize individual differences. But, the most able and successful teachers were not compromising in the application of those standards for quality of work to every activity a child undertook. When a piece of work or a creative product was considered to be of poor quality for the particular child, the work was returned with the requirement that it be improved. The teacher would most often indicate what was lacking in the child's work but would rarely give so much help that the child could hastily revise his paper without critical self-evaluation. The onus was placed on the child to find the means of attaining greater perfection in his work.

The products of creative expression were evaluated as critically as other work. Aesthetic criticism was as much a part of the teacher's evaluative activities as assessment of language usage or maths skills. The best teachers rarely accepted anything without critical appraisal. Assessment did not take the form of number or letter grades. The criticism was often given orally at the time the child submitted a piece of work. When this was not feasible because of time pressures, the criticism might be written on the submitted work product. The important point is that the most effective English teachers knew what expectations were appropriate for each child's achievement and made these clear. When the children understood precisely what was demanded of them, they had little difficulty meeting those expectations.

Delegation of Responsibility

"Make the children do" was the direction the English teachers frequently gave the American students. Even the teachers who had not attained full integration of studies in work with children were very capable of delegating responsibilities.

In the best organized classrooms the children were expected to find materials they needed to carry on their work. Those teachers who were intent on developing children's self-direction in learning helped their children raise questions or called questions to their attention but then directed the children to find means of obtaining answers, given only those clues the teacher deemed appropriate.

Children were expected to carry out all tasks pertaining to care of the physical environment. "Tidy up" meant put things in order, attain neatness. Children were not permitted to neglect their responsibility to return materials to their rightful places, discard trash, and keep their possessions carefully stored when not in use.

Responsibility for looking after younger children was often delegated to the most mature children in vertically grouped classes. The older children were expected to help their younger classmates in many ways, from assisting with menial tasks to helping with an academic assignment. Children were often paired for this purpose. The older children seriously discharged these responsibilities.

Perception of Possibilities for Studies

The outstanding teachers possessed highly developed capabilities to perceive many directions for study arising from topics of interest. These teachers had excellent brainstorming skills. When a child approached a perceptive teacher with an interest (even if vaguely defined), the teacher would generate a host of possible directions which the child might take to extend his study. This appeared to be a critical teaching skill because many infant and junior children are not always able to define directions for probing an interest.

The teacher's ability to generate suggestions from which the child might select the most provocative was important for the maintenance of involvement in undertakings which could be fruitful of many learnings. Without such idea stimulation, children could, and often did, flit from activity to activity, i.e., touch the surface of many things without probing any one idea in sufficient

depth to constitute a challenging, stretching intellectual experience.

Lead Questioning

Another skill which the most effective teachers demonstrated time and again was the ability to ask questions in a sequence which built upon an idea or aided the child in arriving at a correct answer. The questions asked were rarely open-ended. Most were tightly structured to elicit a correct response, sometimes a yes or no answer. Although these questioning patterns did not encourage the child to do much talking while responding to them, they did serve to take him toward an answer which he was certain of discovering if he correctly answered the preceding questions. In essence, the teachers who used this technique were programming the material to be learned, using branching questions at those times when the child was unable to correctly respond. Ability to skillfully formulate lead question sequences requires: (1) depth of knowledge of the idea or concept to be developed, (2) ability to use language and phrase questions in precise ways so that each question clearly indicates what is being asked, and (3) knowledge of the respondent's preparation for handling the idea under examination.

Conservation and Creative Use of Materials

England is not as affluent as America in its educational software and hardware. The scarcity of paper is evident in shops where paper products are expensive and paper bags unavailable without charge. The schools too have smaller supplies of paper products than most American schools and so, conservation of what exists is mandatory.

American children are wasteful by comparison to their English counterparts. English teachers require children to conserve materials.

A great deal of writing and creative expression is encouraged, but materials used for such purposes are thoroughly used. Once begun, papers are not discarded even if many errors need to be corrected on the copy. Erasures are not generally allowed--perhaps because erasers or rubbers, as the English call them, are not in plentiful supply. Children are expected to bracket or cross noted errors in their written work and correctly rewrite the work or phrase on the same paper.

Great emphasis was placed on the reuse of discarded items. Children and teachers collected waste materials for use in construction and visual arts. Food packaging, fabric remnants, and sundry odds and ends were in constant use for all types of exploratory work in the sciences and arts.

Most of the schools were not well stocked with commercially prepared materials, teaching devices, or reproductive machinery. However, the head teacher who ordered wisely bought materials which could be used by children and teachers to make their own instructional aids.

The absence of reproductive machinery mandated the children's economical use of materials. Work cards, for instance, might be present in single copy and had to be worked from as one would the page of a book. Sometimes, but not always, this required some copying of questions. The point is that the children were expected to work from cards and other materials only available in single copies in the classroom, in ways which would preserve the materials.

There was a notably pleasing absence of duplicated worksheets in all classrooms visited. In the better classrooms, the children's written work usually evolved from an idea or experience they had rather than an assignment sheet or card the teacher had made (or copied from a textbook).

No classroom visited had such equipment as overhead projector, tape recorder, slide projector, or 16 mm film projector. Some classrooms boasted a phonograph. Few had a television receiver or radio and videotape equipment was nonexistent. The teachers used charts and chalkboard for most of the materials they wished to post. Because instruction was not carried on with the entire class, there was little need for enlargement of printed materials.

The absence of film projectors and films meant that teachers had to rely on books and pictures to enhance children's store of vicarious experiences (though school libraries were not as well stocked as American schools' media centers).

The best teachers made extensive use of the out-of-doors environment. Trips to nearby places of interest were a major source of stimulation for study.

Problem Identification

Ability to pinpoint the cause of a child's difficulty or a class problem was possessed by the most accomplished teachers. To some degree, this capability is related to the excellent standard of language usage on the part of the English educators. But this skill of problem identification goes beyond ability to use words precisely. In the case of the English teachers, ability to identify problems seemed a product of experience and professional studies which developed the teacher's knowledge of how to perceive a situation objectively, i.e., step out of it to focus sharply on all possible contributing factors in an effort to define the core of the difficulty in terms others comprehend. Needless to say, not all English teachers practice this highly sophisticated problem solving technique. The most successful teachers use it regularly.

Presentation of Children's Work

The many displays of children's work found in the schools visited were often impressive. In the most exciting classrooms, they were awesome. The best English teachers are sensitive to aesthetically pleasing modes of presenting children's work products. They create displays which are colorful, explanatory (by statement or implication) of the process by which the products were created, and illustrative of several types of expression (visual and written). The displays might mark the beginning, middle, or end products of some study. The good ones commanded attention. They provoked reflection on the nature of the studies undertaken and their possible extension. They engendered in the viewer respect for the creators.

Such were the strengths of the best English primary teachers the writer met while working in Lancashire. Being human, they had their weaknesses as well. Those which were most often evident are presented below.

Coping With Vertical Grouping

Theoretically, the combining of five, six, and seven-year-olds provides opportunity for children to progress at their own rate of growth regardless of chronological age and maturity at any point in time because the mix of ages demands that the teacher cater for differences rather than apply one standard to all. Mixed age groups also encourage peer teaching. By living and working together for three years, children and teacher come to know one another sufficiently well to permit the accommodation of individual needs.

In practice, the combining of five, six, and seven-year-olds seemed to compound the instructional and organizational problems teachers faced. The difficulty appeared to stem from the widened range of ability and maturity in

each class comprised of three chronological age groups. Even the most conscientious teachers found it hard to provide equally well for all the children in their classes. It was not unusual to find the older children bearing so much responsibility for watching over and helping the littlest ones that the helpers remained unchallenged. Although the value of the seven-year-old's experiences in teaching the younger children should not be underestimated, the fact that they spend more time reviewing acquired learnings than exploring new ideas, developing more sophisticated concepts, and refining their basic skills must be recognized as a serious drawback of vertical or family grouping. In the writer's estimation, the seven-year-olds in most vertically grouped infant classes were not being stretched.

The English teachers and county advisers pointed to the possibility of five-year-olds being forgotten in vertically grouped classes where emphasis was placed on preparing the seven-year-olds for junior school. The stated objection to such situations was that the little ones were left to play too long while the teacher worked with the older children. This, of course, can occur, but the writer found the older children to be the forgotten ones in most cases. In addition, she felt that the fives were often pushed too hard to achieve and played too little. As one perceptive student remarked when worrying aloud about the five-year-olds in her vertically grouped class, "They're not having much chance to develop social skills. Too much reading and writing is expected of them. They're not ready for that yet."

Though multi-age grouping was in evidence in junior classes, it was not the dominant organizational pattern. Where children of different chronological ages were combined in one junior class, the age range rarely exceeded two years.

On reflection, the difficulty observed in vertically grouped infant classes seemed directly related to the three-year span of age mixing which expands the teacher's problem of providing appropriate tasks and guidance for children at diverse stages of development and achievement. Such differences are in evidence in any heterogeneous group of children of one chronological age. While one may find five-year-olds who are more advanced socially and intellectually than some seven-year-olds and who can benefit from instruction which would be considered appropriate for older children, most five-year-olds are at a different stage of development than most sevens. The difference between fives and sevens in social maturity alone is dramatically evident in most vertically grouped classes. The teacher's task becomes unreasonably complicated because she must cultivate the short-lived interests of her five-year-olds who, in spite of their pursuit of self-identified interests, may not have the skills necessary to explore possibilities for extending those interests. The teacher is often hard put to keep her fives constructively engaged while also challenging the older children who are likely to be capable of doing more with an interest than their younger classmates can or wish to do. These are exceptions, to be sure, but the seven-year-olds the writer observed were readier than the fives for extension of interests and assumption of responsibilities. This seemed to be true even if the sevens did not possess highly developed basic skills. Most teachers observed tended to focus their attention on the fives because they demanded the most attention. The sixes got some attention because they were eager for help with what they were doing. The sevens were employed as teacher aides.

While the best infants' teachers tried to encourage individual children to pursue their own interests, the teachers who were less capable in using

informal methods of teaching grouped the children by age. Thus, the fives comprised a separate subunit of the class as did the sixes and the sevens. Such subgroupings did not permit much cross-age grouping for instructional activity consistent with children's needs, whether derived from children's interests or teacher-initiated assignments.

The greatest benefit of vertical grouping may not be derived from the mix of different ages. It seems to be derived from the children's three-year length of stay with one teacher who is able to intimately acquaint herself with the special needs of each child during the duration of their association. Perhaps teachers dislike having to begin with a totally new group of children every three years. Certainly, there is merit in the notion of gradual turnover in class membership. In the writer's view, a more sensible arrangement would be the mixing of children representing the equivalent of only a two-year age range. Or, a mixing of ages in such a way as to decrease the number of very young children demanding special attention might enable the teacher to divide her time more equitably among all the children in her class. The group could remain together with one teacher for two or three years, thereby having the advantages derived from extended association with, of course, provision for changing class placements in response to special personality needs in teacher-child relationships. Furthermore, some attention should be given to mixing upper infants and lower juniors to deliberately blur the distinction which currently exists between infant and junior schools.

Few of the junior classes the writer visited offered children as much opportunity for pursuit of interests and development of expressive capabilities as even the least inspiring of the infant classes. Some cross-fertilization of teaching methods and philosophical orientations between infant and junior

teachers might help hasten the attainment of continuity in children's education (especially as they move from infant to junior classes). It is distressing to see the paucity of children's creativeness, both qualitative and quantitative, in even the better junior schools.

Record Keeping and Evaluation

Perhaps the greatest instructional handicap of informal, integrated methods is related to record keeping and evaluation. When thirty-odd children, representing that many levels of development, are pursuing different activities at different times, it is mandatory that the teacher keep clear records of work completed, achievements, and needed instruction. Most of the English teachers found this task an unwieldly one. Therefore, records were inadequately kept.

Most often "tick" sheets of completed activities were maintained. These experiential records did not provide sufficient information about the quality of children's work or, indeed, the nature of learning problems encountered. Some teachers maintained tick sheets for skills in math and reading. Rarely, however, were these as extensive as the check lists American textbook series provide teachers. (It is worth mentioning that a math text prepared for distribution in England was being looked to by Lancashire infants' teachers for identification of specific skills to note in providing instruction in maths because the teachers were aware of their inadequate provision for varied and sequential maths learnings).

Teachers claimed that they had mental "records" of their children's capabilities. Undoubtedly they did, to some degree. Yet, the American students may be credited with the maintenance of anecdotal records for the

children. By so doing, they brought to the attention of class teachers the intellectual, emotional, physical, and social achievements and needs of many children.

The fact remains that extensive record keeping and regular assessment are important if informal teaching procedures are to be effective in helping children make the most of their school experiences. The teacher bears the responsibility of providing the challenge. Not all children are equally intent on stretching their minds. To allow them to lie fallow is as immoral as pushing too hard in directions which are not sutiable for the child. The teacher who allows a child to spend his school day, week on end, superficially flitting from one thing to another is contributing to the waste of human talent. This is a serious concern in attempts to informalize education.

Forcing Integration of Studies

Integration of studies can be marvelously successful in helping children develop naturally while enjoying the process. But the problem of superficiality is a threat to effective use of children's time. So is the artificiality of much that can go on in the name of the integrated day. Even the best teachers sometimes fell into the trap of trying so hard to integrate learnings that the direction of children's studies bordered on inanity.

Referring back to the purist's definition of integration which was offered earlier herein, one can recognize the possibility of attempting to force an area of interest to develop more learnings than it can naturally yield, thereby violating the integrity of the interest or the discipline of knowledge which is forced to fit the interest. For instance, it was not unlikely to find that:

1. because children had made papier mache animals, they were expected to weigh them;

2. because a child had become interested in wild flowers, he was required to count and add various combinations of wild flowers;

3. because children had visited a zoo, they were told to compute the weight of various numbers of elephants;

4. because a child had studied the growth of seeds, he was expected to write an imaginative story about seeds (when a factual report of findings would have been more appropriate).

The teachers were often so intent on drawing maths, writing, and "creative" from each topic of study that they sometimes pushed too far with any one idea.

The discipline which suffered most from forced integration was mathematics. A mathematician might pale at the ways in which the discipline was treated so that it might be integrated with other studies. The educator can feel equal distress over the not uncommon tendency for every project undertaken by a child to become an exercise in weighing and measuring. Pushed to its extreme (and it often was), almost every product of a child's artistic creation was weighed or measured or counted. Taken by itself, this is not damaging. However, when one realizes that maths was often limited to weighing, measuring, and counting for no apparent purpose, i.e., not in answer to any really burning questions; when one acknowledges the fact that the children were rarely given opportunities to examine numbers apart from their most practical applications; that little attempt was made to develop children's sensitivity to numbers as a language system having innate characteristics deserving of, yes, segregated exploration--when one realizes this, one is bound to question the wisdom of seeking integration of studies at the expense of depth of study.

When asked, "Why integrate?" English teachers generally respond, "Because by so doing, school more closely approximates life in the outside world." Is that really so? In spite of the writer's deep commitment to education which serves to help the child interweave his activities and draw stimulation for serious study from his interests, she believes that life is not as integrated as some school activities are forced to become. Furthermore, the writer has come to the conclusion, based on the experience in English primary schools, that depth of knowledge is critical, often prerequisite, to the ability to perceive more than the obvious, inquire beyond the superficial, communicate key ideas, critically examine those ideas and create from them. The teachers, who were best able to stimulate children to bigger and better understandings knew whereof they spoke about the area of exploration. They could see the possibilities which only the knowledgeable can identify. To use a simple and obvious example, it is the difference between seeing a bird and only seeing a creature as opposed to perceiving that bird as a representation of evolution, aerodynamics, aesthetic construction and asking questions to make one's knowledge beget new ideas, more sophisticated concepts, better connections between one's most fundamental notions about birds and one's broader understanding of their remarkable characteristics as winged organisms.

Unless the integrated day, as an approach to education, can help children enhance their understandings and capabilities to know, think, and feel, it is a sham. When studies interconnect naturally, the connections can be profitably used by the teacher to help children recognize their need to know. But when connections are effected artificially, the time is at hand to look elsewhere for ways to introduce the young to the knowledge of the past to which they have a rightful claim, whether or not they know their rights and privileges,

as members of the human race. If school is to be part of life, then teachers must recognize that life is not so integrated, in the strictest sense of the term, as one might think. Nor, necessarily, should it be. There should be room in day to day living for the moments when one creates without verbalizing about the creation, when one manipulates numbers for the joy of contemplating their unique qualities and feeling master of them, when one enjoys reading a piece of literature without trying to make a representation of the mental images it stimulates or analyzing it, when one savors a piece of information and that's all (at the moment). In fact, education must provide for both segregated and integrated activities because both types are productive of worthwhile learnings.

Interpersonal Relating

The impression English educators have of American education and lines of authority is that: "American parents run the schools and American children run their parents--and teachers." The teachers in Lancashire judge Americans to be too permissive in child-rearing. Whatever the reader's position on this issue, it is important to understand that English adult-child relationships are based on a view of child-rearing as a civilizing process. The child is trained for social and intellectual discipline. English children are ostensibly well-mannered. They are more soft-spoken, more formal in language and manner, more adult-like in bearing than American children. The American student who remarked, "They're like little adults!" was not without cause (in spite of the fact that English children can be as disruptive and disobedient as any Americans). But the English children lack the candor, the free and easy give and take which is characteristic of American children's interactions with one another and adults.

The English teacher brooks no disobedience on the part of the young. He will permit few infractions of established rules. He does not perceive leadership as something to be shared with children all of the time. Accordingly, the English teacher, even the informal English teacher, maintains his position of authority in the classroom through every word and action. It is the rare English teacher who has class control problems. (The writer should note that the American students soon came to realize that informal teaching methods and attempts to work from children's interests do not, in and of themselves, eliminate problems of class control.)

English teachers demand respect; they act as leaders in classrooms which are as status conscious, have as clearly defined roles, and as equally well defined limits for interbehavior among people occupying different roles (where superior-subordinate distinctions are clearly understood) as one will find in the broader English culture. The English classroom both reflects and shapes that culture.

PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED WHILE PRACTICE TEACHING IN ENGLAND

Once the students had been oriented to the schools and classrooms in which they were to spend the bulk of their time while in England, they began a period of intense work. Following the pattern for practice teaching assignments established by the English college with which the Americans were affiliated, the students were required to maintain a notebook containing the items listed in the accompanying outline. All students were to develop something analogous to a unit of work which might serve as a stimulus for developing children's interests and integrating their studies. The students were also expected to prepare materials for learning centers within their assigned classrooms. They were to work toward assuming full responsibility for the conduct of class activities, keeping records of children's work and school progress. Daily activities were to be noted in the diary section of the notebook along with evaluations of their work and analyses of their problems.

Because most of the students were paired for practice teaching, they faced the added burden of organizing their classroom activities for co-operative teaching. This proved to be no easy task.

Throughout their practice teaching period, the students worked with a diligence and dedication unparalleled in the writer's experience with groups of students. They approached their work with a seriousness born of intent to prove themselves. The level of achievement motivation was so high as to be emotionally taxing. No doubt this was due to the students' sense

OUTLINE FOR SCHOOL PRACTICE NOTEBOOK

American Students, Spring '72

Sections

I Introduction
- Name and address of school
- Name of Head Teacher
- Number of children in school and age range
- Notes on school district (socio-economic characteristics of community)
- School-related organizations and types of activities carried on in school to service the community (in addition to regular work with children)
- Dates of Practice Period
- Class and class teacher's name
- List of children's names, dates of birth, and ages
- Plan of classroom (diagram and notes)
- Class timetable

II Schemes or Units of Work
- Theme
- Work already covered
- Objectives in each content area
- Activities related to each objective

III Daily Notes and Plans
- Date and Program
- Observations of activities conducted by classroom teachers
- Lesson Plans
  - Objectives
  - Materials
  - Organization
  - Procedure or Activites
  - Anticipated problems
  - Means of evaluating children's learnings
  - Assessment of lesson's effectiveness

IV Records on Children

V Teaching Ideas (Time Fillers)
- Description
- Evaluation

VI Comparative Analysis of Cultural and Educational Differences

Lancashire Florida

of acting as representatives of their university, their culture, and their country. (Indeed, the English continually referred to the students as "The Americans.") In addition, the students approached their classroom assignments with high expectations for their professional development as effective informal teachers.

Also important in setting the tone for the students' seriousness of purpose were the expectations which the English head and class teachers held for them. The students were led to understand (through direct and indirect communication early in their school visits) that they were not viewed as teachers just because they had been assigned a practice teaching post. They were to prove their worth by demonstrating their abilities. As the English termed it, this was "the test" and one could more easily fail then successfully complete its tasks. Little allowance was made for failure. It became quite clear to the students that they could not fail too often if they wished to obtain a satisfactory evaluation of their teaching performance at term's end.

The expectations were explicit. The pressure was felt. The students responded by working long hours each day; through morning coffee, dinner, and afternoon tea breaks at school; after the evening meal at the college often until some hours past midnight; and on weekends. They often spent hours in school beyond the closing of the school day, missing the coach which transported them from their schools to the college; missing the evening meal at the college because public transportation was not sufficiently accessible or regular to enable the students to travel easily or at will

(a work to rule "strike" was put into effect on the railway during the students' practice teaching). Some spent Saturdays (and Sundays) in their classrooms. When asked why they exerted so much effort, they responded, "There's nothing else to do." Nonetheless, the real reason was that they were intent on making a good impression, proving themselves, and "not letting their supervisor down" as well.

To some degree the students were successful. In a number of ways, they contributed much to the work of the teachers and children with whom they were associated. Yet, most felt that they fell short of the goals they held for their work in English primary schools. At the conclusion of the experience, the American students and their American tutor were forced to admit that they had tried too hard to achieve too much and, therefore, terminated their work in the schools with a feeling of frustration. They were not able to accomplish all they set out to accomplish partly because of their own personal limitations but also because of the limits imposed by the situations in which they worked.

The forces which hindered the American party from attaining the admittedly ambitious goals its members embarked with from the states were varied, sometimes unexpected, and often subtle. Those which became increasingly evident as time passed are discussed in the following pages.

Culture Shock

Typically the newness a foreigner encounters abroad contributes to the fun of being away from home. Accordingly, the unique patterns of eating--types and preparation of foods, times of meals, table settings and use of eating utensils--modes of dress, climate, currency and its relative value which the students experienced in Lancashire contributed to their awareness of being in a country

different from their own. These differences took some getting used to, but they did not constitute the greatest problems of adjustment to new surroundings.

There was the expected problem of comprehending unusual accents in speech. The broad Lancastrian accent of the children in the schools caused communication problems for some students. However, at least this problem was lessened with continued exposure to words pronounced in "strange" ways.

The most debilitating difficulty was the feeling of being "strangers in a strange land," a feeling which became more intense with each passing day. The disquieting feeling was not neutralized by duration of immersion in English culture or adoption of Lancastrian life style.

It soon became evident that American and Eng'ish languages differ in many more ways than by accent alone. The Americans came to realize that they could not always make their messages clear to others by using American terminology. More seriously, the Americans discovered that English communications are often fraught with hidden messages. One county adviser aptly stated, "What an Englishman does not say is often more important than what he appears to be saying." The American who is unused to listening for clues to hidden meanings in verbal messages runs the risk of never truly comprehending the essence of the Englishman's remarks.

> The English maintain a high degree of formality in their interpersonal relations, so much so that, to an American, most Englishmen appear aloof. And, they are not as quick as Americans to give praise even if they are thinking a complimentary thought about another while in that person's presence. The tendency of head and class teachers not to give praise even when earned--to one another,

the children they taught, or student teachers--was a great source of dismay to the American students who, in addition to being accustomed to a great deal of praise, frequently given, were in desparate need of the psychological support a "good" word can offer as they struggled with the difficulties of homesickness, fatigue, and intense activity which gained sharpness with the increasing duration of their stay abroad.

The English teachers with whom the students worked might offer a student well-taken criticisms. By contrast, most American directing teachers are quick to praise and reluctant to criticize. Both tendencies appear to be overdrawn. In conversations with the writer, one English student remarked that during her practice teaching the critical comments directed to her frequently drew tears. But, she added, they helped tremendously. The American students were quickly deflated by even mild criticism. They wanted so desperately to be liked and approved of that they sought only positive reinforcement. When this was not forthcoming, they felt defeated and rejected--feelings which were intensified by the pressures of trying to cope with so much newness in their foreign environment.

These observations raise the questions: How well are we preparing our students to cope with and grow from the jolt of critical appraisal? How capable are we of finding the most efficient and effective mix of praise and criticism in helping ourselves and others continue to develop as teachers and knowledgeable persons?

The Role of the Directing Teacher

A particularly critical problem which some of the American students faced was an outgrowth of their teachers' lack of knowledge or sufficient time to act as directing teachers. Though they wished to help the Americans, they did not always know how best to contribute to the students' success in teaching.

An example of good supervision by a classroom teacher may be drawn from the work of the same teacher mentioned earlier herein for her successful use of informal, integrated methods with children:

> When the students arrived in her class, the teacher interviewed them to determine their backgrounds of knowledge and experience in teaching. From the data she collected, she devised a program for the students' involvement in the children's activities. Accordingly, the students began working with individuals and groups of children who were already underway in pursuits of some interest. The students continued in this way until the time was at hand to launch a new idea with the children. The teacher helped the students conduct a discussion with the class to define possible topics of interest which might serve as stimuli for new explorations. From this discussion, a theme was identified. The students brainstormed, with their teacher, possibilities for children's studies. They proceeded to consult resource materials to broaden their knowledge of the theme and its subthemes. The children began work on varied aspects of the theme with the assistance of the students (rather than the class teacher at this time). Each of the two students assumed responsibility for following, checking up and recording, and extending the work of one half the class. As they delved further into the theme with the children, the students made note of new interests and possibilities arising from the studies already underway or nearing completion. In a short time,with the guidance of constructive feedback from their directing teacher, the students were able to supervise the many activities in all curriculum areas which specific children were carrying out.

The two students who worked with their teacher in the way described above experienced success because they were helped to gradually assume responsibility for stimulating, extending, and evaluating the activities of children they had come to know in an environment they had helped shape. Throughout their time in their assignment the students were supported and aided by a teacher who was

sensitive to their needs, willing to offer feedback and direction, and gradually relinquish control so that the students might ease into the very demanding role of holding together the strands of diverse activity in an informal, integrated approach to children's education.

When teachers were themselves struggling with the task of implementing an integrated program in their classes at the time the students arrived, they were unable to provide the necessary direction to the novice. In many cases, the teachers turned the class over to the students too soon. Thus, the students were faced with problems of class control and organization which greatly hampered their attainments of the educational goals they had so carefully formulated.

Some teachers viewed the students as substitute teachers. They left the classroom rarely to return. When this happened, the students were given little feedback, positive or negative, from which to draw new directions for work. The teachers' lack of knowledge of what the students were doing and how well they were working was sometimes painfully apparent in conferences the writer held with teachers and with teachers and students together.

ANALYSIS OF THE STUDENTS' TEACHING DIFFICULTIES

As already noted, in her capacity as student teaching supervisor, the writer spent many hours observing the students at work with the children (and sometimes working with the children herself). These experiences together with many conferences and much analytical thought about the students, their difficulties, their capabilities, and the situations within which they were working helped define some common needs. The most critical ones are presented here in the hope that this examination may help those who are attempting to improve teacher education programs.

Organizational Skills

To be organized became the fervent wish of the Americans practice teaching in England because they became aware of their lack of ability to systematize space, time, materials, and the deployment of people as soon as they assumed responsibility for teaching in an informal manner.

Good classroom organization for informal education requires:

1. knowing specifically what one wishes to accomplish and why.
2. identifying, ordering, and sequencing possible alternatives for activity.
3. strategically positioning materials and furniture for maximum efficiency of use.

4. tracking and subtly directing or governing individual and group activity patterns.

5. keeping the multiple strands of activity in view and related to the whole for each child and the class group.

Organizational ability hinges on the propensity to ask and answer the questions: who will do what? where? when? how? and why? Some students were unaware of the appropriate questions to ask. Others experienced difficulty in finding the answers.

The students worked hard to organize themselves and their classes. By muddling through, some were able to note in the diaries, "Now I am organized!" Yet, muddling through can be frustrating and wasteful of time. It would seem that preparation which acquaints students with alternative patterns for classroom organization and develops their skills in categorizing, systematizing, and asking the right questions about their work with classes of children would reduce the time spent in trial and error. Students so trained should be able to move more quickly toward implementing informal procedures in ways which help rather than hinder the children's learning (for muddling through problems of class organization does hinder children's learning).

Problem Definition

When the students experienced difficulties, they quite rightly sought to talk about them. One characteristic of that task was use of much time and many words. This, in itself, is not undesirable. Time spent in talking through a felt difficulty can help clarify the problem. But the students spent inordinate amounts of time talking around a problem, often perseverating on factors which were marginal to the problem's solution.

Ability to define the core of an instructional problem seems related to:

1. asking oneself many questions.
2. scanning the problem situation for all possible contributing factors.
3. identifying all possible factors before editing.
4. focusing sharply on each identified factor to probe for related elements.
5. striving to use language as precisely as possible.

This process is what the English term "sorting out." The best English teachers are masters at the art because they possess excellent proficiency in word usage (their language is precise and succinct) and they know how to generate a flow of ideas, i.e., brainstorm, free associate. Students preparing to teach should have the benefit of training which develops their brainstorming processes through many problem identification exercises demanding precision in use of language.

Decision-making Capability

When the students experienced control problems, the single most critical cause of their difficulties was indecisiveness. Children readily sense the insecurity of a teacher who is unable to clearly and consistently give suggestions or directions. The delegation of decision-making responsibilities to the children on all issues can overwhelm them. The teacher must assume some decision-making responsibility as group leader because the decisions she makes influence the children's sense of security, especially the very young children, and the smoothness of activity in the classroom.

Students were indecisive when they were not clear as to their goals and when they were not able to predict what the consequences of alternative

decisions might be. To be sure, such foresight develops with the right type of experience. That experience can be obtained in simulated as well as non-simulated situations. In the former, possibilities are greater for control of extraneous variables. Many simulated experiences for decision-making can provide time for mulling over possible actions, selecting one on the basis of predicted outcomes, taking the action, and comparing the outcome with predictions. The time students spent in mulling over a potential decision while the children were waiting provoked disruption of activity and the breakdown of class discipline.

Lead Questioning Skill

Questioning to lead a child to come upon a correct response through appropriate reasoning was a skill demonstrated by the most capable English teachers. Few students were able to ask series of leading questions probably because their training in questioning had focused on use of the open-ended query. Although the English teachers may be criticized for not asking questions which solicited lengthy responses from the children, their ability to program their questions so that key ideas might be "discovered" by the child must be recognized as valuable. That students need training in questioning skill is self-evident because the teacher's instructional role is primarily one of solicitor. That they should be able to ask open-ended questions is also indicated by educational goals of developing children's verbal expressive abilities. (The English teachers work toward this through the children's written work.) In addition, students need to know how to ask series of questions which direct a child's reasoning for productive convergent thought.

Definition of Standards

The students had difficulty evaluating children's work (and their own) when they were unsure of the appropriate standards to apply. In an informal classroom, the standards will vary from child to child. Nonetheless, the best teachers always maintained standards which were qualitatively high but realistic for the particular child for whom those expectations were held. The students often remarked that American standards of work for children are more often quantitative than qualitative. They discovered that children can achieve more than most American teachers demand and that even the highly motivated children need some explicit indication of expectations for their achievement.

Defining appropriate quality standards for work is difficult. Consistently upgrading those standards is equally demanding. Try as they might, the students were not always able to challenge the children though, in fairness to the students, it is important to note that many English teachers had similar difficulty. The point here is that teacher education programs must specifically provide for the examination of the standards issue. The central question is: What are appropriate learnings in each of the disciplines of knowledge for children at different stages of development? As he prepares for teaching, the student needs to learn how to define expectations for children's work, how to evaluate that work in terms of those expectations, and how to challenge children to move toward attainments which their lack of experience and knowledge prevents them from seeing as possibilities.

THE BENEFITS OF THE TRANS-ATLANTIC QUEST

The Trans-Atlantic Quest yielded personal as well as professional benefits to the students. By living abroad, the students learned a great deal about life in Lancashire. They broadened their awareness of English culture. They learned how to live with inconvenience and scarcity of those things Americans would consider necessities. They learned to cope with newness, hostility, misunderstanding, illness, frustration, and disappointment. They found they could push themselves to limits of endurance and gain a "second wind." They became appreciative of their homeland for all it offers them and means to them. To be American became something precious in their view. And they recognized that no one at home would truly comprehend what they had experienced or how they came to feel as they do about their nation and fellow countrymen. These learnings and attitudes were by far the most significant products of the experience abroad.

With few exceptions, the students did not emerge from their experiences in English primary schools with extensive knowledge of how to informalize and integrate the school day. But they did gain some understanding of the demands of giving everything one's got to the act of teaching.

Twenty-three Americans returned home from England in June, 1972 much wiser, more humble, and more appreciative of their homeland as a result of their experiences abroad. The depth of their learnings may not be adequately assessed before some time has passed. That they matured is evident in their

posture, their manner, their language and tone of voice, the soulful expressions in their eyes. The students observed, "We went abroad as students and returned as teachers." The person who watched over them would put it this way, "They returned home more adult than when they left." The same is true of their leader.

What more can be said of the experience than the students' remark:

IT WAS REAL!